

Court Participation Initiative

In addition to managing the health and well-being of the children and young adults in their care, foster parents also serve as important advocates for their foster children. For this reason, under the federal Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA), foster parents must be given notice of-and an opportunity to be heard in-any review or hearing involving the child or children in their care.

One of the most significant hearings in a foster child's life is the 12-month permanency hearing, held within 12 months of his or her entry into out-of-home-care, during which a judge makes a determination of whether and when a child will be returned home, placed for adoption, referred for legal guardianship, or assigned another permanent living arrangement. As a foster child's primary caregivers, foster parents can provide valuable information to assist a judge in making this important decision.



Under the Court Participation Initiative, we at Foster Forward work with the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to ensure that any foster parent who chooses to be heard in court at the 12-month permanency hearing-and/or any other hearing involving their foster child or children-does so effectively.

UNDER THE COURT PARTICIPATION INITIATIVE, WE:

- Ensure that foster parents receive timely notice of the 12-month permanency hearing for the child or children in their care so that they may exercise their right to be heard in court and support the best interests of their foster child or children.
- Provide foster parents with resources and support to guide their effective participation in the hearing, including the Foster Parent Court Hearing Report Form (PDF), which helps foster parents frame their comments in a way that is helpful to the court in the decision-making process.
- Improve the court participation process and facilitate better outcomes for youth in foster care by collecting and analyzing feedback from foster parents regarding their experiences participating in their foster child or children's 12-month permanency hearing.

(Locate Foster Parent Court Hearing Report Form by accessing www.fosterforward.net/ select Resources/ select Foster Parent Resources/ select Court Participation form and survey. Court Report form is mailed to all providers prop to the permanency court hearing date.)